

“It is Written...”

BIBLE READING - Luke 4 verses 1 to 14 NIV

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’

⁴ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone.”’

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.’

⁸ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”’

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here.

¹⁰ For it is written:

*“He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;*

*¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”’*

¹² Jesus answered, ‘It is said: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

SERMON

Before Jesus was able to undertake His God given Ministry, He had to wait until He was 30 years old. His natural mother Mary knew, with a supernatural revelation from the Archangel Gabriel, that she would bear a son who would be Almighty God's only Son, a supernatural incarnation of God Himself, in the form of a man, growing in the womb of an obedient young lady.

By the age of 10 or 12, family members and observers would have come to realise Jesus was no ordinary son of a carpenter; indeed the Bible tells us his own mother rebuked him when she lost Him in the crowds and found Him discussing in detail the Scriptures with men of God in the temple; but it wasn't until the age of 30 that God allowed his Son's ministry to begin.

Moses, Joseph, King David, Paul of Tarsus, **all** the mighty men of the Bible had to go through a period of preparation, character building, probably scared and afraid, while they waited for God's perfect timing - before they could do the work, they were called by Him to do.

And we hear in the Scriptures today that before God could release His Son into His God-ordained ministry He had to prove that He could withstand the temptations of the devil when Jesus was at His absolute weakest.

And that doesn't surprise me.

Don't you find, that the times when you are most likely to shout, curse or swear; hit out in anger (in other words 'sin') is when you are tired, stressed, grieving, hurting?

When we are happy and all is well, isn't it so much easier to be nice and kind, compassionate and loving? Isn't it easier not to succumb to temptation and sin?

And so, Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted.

A test – how will he respond? Will He 'man up'? Or will he cave in?

You may find it interesting as I did, to learn that it wasn't the devil who took Jesus into the wilderness. It was God.

Let's work through the Bible reading beginning at verse 1 – we are told by the writer Luke that Jesus '**was led by the Spirit into the wilderness**'. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit. (Incidentally, although it is Luke who is penning the verses of this Book of the Bible, he is doing so in obedience to the Supernatural words of

God spoken into in his mind). The Bible is the Word of God, written down by His chosen men and women.

So, God led Jesus into the wilderness and sometimes He will lead you and me there too. Why was Jesus led there? Let's read verse 2.

'Where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.'

Now it is Biblical fact that God tempts no-one, it is the Devil, Satan who tempts us. He lives, that he might tempt us to sin. He **hates** all humankind and his objective is to cause us to be like him, a liar, a cheat, a deceiver and a God hater. If he can succeed in doing that to a man or a woman, then he has achieved his evil plan - of making yours and other peoples' lives a misery and of preventing your salvation.

The original Greek used here in verse two for the word translated 'tempted' could also mean 'tested' and to me it is pretty clear that the correct word is tested.

Jesus was tested by God to see how He would respond to being tempted by the devil!

The devil is **not** a figment of anybody's imagination. He is a spirit being, extremely powerful in his own right, and will tempt you and me every day, if we let him.

He knows the Scriptures better than you or I and he will use them, when talking to men or women of God, in order to try to persuade us to do wrong.

Jesus tells us in John chapter 8 that there is no truth in the devil, he is a liar and the father of lies. He deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and as a result, all mankind born ever since has a default condition to sin.

Now, if you take nothing else away from my talk today, please do listen carefully to what I am about to say because it is an extremely important fact and Biblical principal.

And this is it: There is only one way to rebuke the devil. There is only one way to ensure you do not allow yourself to be tempted by the devil to sin, to do what is wrong and then endure the myriad of consequences for you and others of your actions.

And that is to follow the example we see Jesus using here in this passage. Three times Jesus corrects Satan's deception by quoting God's Holy Word to him in this powerfully important paragraph in the Bible.

So important is it to God that we understand the key to overcoming Satan by using Scriptural truth, that He told three Gospel writers to record this same event. Matthew and Mark record Jesus' testing in the wilderness as well as Luke. Repetition is a technique God uses in the Bible, to underline something's importance!

So, getting back into the passage we are studying, let's look now at verse 3. What did Satan tempt Jesus to do and how did Jesus respond?

The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'

⁴ Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."'

'If you are the Son of God....'

The arrogance of the devil, the abhorrent arrogance of the devil. Who does he think he is to say to Jesus 'If, you are the Son of God, If.... If.

The total disrespect he shows the Son of God!

Satan **knew** Jesus was the Son of God. He knows the Bible from beginning to end, he knows he will end up in the lake of fire forever when God decides to send Jesus back to set up the Kingdom of God on the new earth.

If Satan speaks to the creator of the universe with such audacity, how much more so will he speak like this to you and me?

I digress, how did Jesus respond to the devil's pride?

With anger? 'Let me put you in your place, you arrogant beep beep beep?'
NO!

He rebuked Satan by simply quoting the words of Holy Scripture to Him.

IT IS WRITTEN! "Man shall not live on bread alone."

Where is that written? The fifth book of the Old Testament – Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 3.

Jesus was starving – he had had nothing to eat for 40 days. If ever a man would give into temptation (knowing he could turn stone into bread), surely this was a sensible thing to do. NO!

If His **Father** had told Him to do it, I am sure Jesus would have obeyed there and then, but God's number one enemy was tempting Him, and He stood His ground.

When you and I are tempted to do wrong, we must learn to quote a Scripture to Satan and show him we are grounded in Scripture. If you have a Bible in your home but maybe you haven't opened it for a while, perhaps today is the day to begin to read it again.

You may not need to read the Bible to say to Satan 'No I won't kill that man, it is wrong, and my family will suffer because if I am caught, I will be sent to prison'.

But what if he says something plausible to you? How will you know if it is the right thing to do? Remember he is subtle. If he knows you are a Christian, he will speak subtle lies to you that sound like truth.

For example, if you are persuaded that God doesn't mind you gossiping about somebody, then you need to be aware of Scriptures like Proverbs 11 v 13 which says

'A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence'.

Or Romans 1 and 2 Corinthians 12 where Paul tells us that gossip is a sin.

If you think it's Ok to God for you to tell 'a little white lie' you need to know the scripture where Jesus says in Matthew 5 v 37: ***'Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one'.***

What's more, the devil will have us think something's Ok if the Bible doesn't directly tell us it's wrong.

So, for example, it doesn't say anywhere in Scripture that 'Gay marriage is wrong'. That's why many in the Church think it's all right. Satan has blinded such people to the truth. It didn't need to even mention gay marriage when the Bible was written, because the whole concept at that time was unthinkable.

And that's because the people of those days knew their Scriptures far better than most people today. They knew, in just the second chapter of the book of Genesis and v 24, that it says, 'A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'.

Jesus repeated this very scripture to the religious leaders of his time in Mark 10 verses 6 to 8.

He said a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to **his wife** – not his husband.

Adam was to spend his life with Eve, not Steve.

People of Biblical times also knew the scripture in Leviticus where it says, 'Homosexuals were to be stoned to death!'

But you have to have read those Scriptures in order to know God's will and to know the truth.

Going back a stage, you have to believe that The Bible, *is* the Word of God!

If Satan can persuade you it's just a book of fairy tales or a good moral book even, anything other than what it truly is – The Word of God - then you have no 'Instruction Manual' by which to live, and consequently you will become like the 'postmodern man' who believes that whatever is truth to him is truth.

The thinking of today is 'My truth is different to your truth and that's 'cool'. It doesn't matter'.

Well, it does matter to God, and your willingness to be deceived into sin and evil, has eternal consequences for your wellbeing and potentially on the wellbeing of those around you too!

Believe me, by God's standard and by his powerful Holy Word, no person's truth is truth at all unless it lines up with the Word of God.

Returning again to the passage, I said Jesus used the same counter-temptation strategy three times.

Let's see. In verses 5 to 7 we hear Satan tempting Jesus a second time. It says this:

'The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority

and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.'

Unlikely as this may sound, it was actually a true statement, which is why Jesus didn't correct Satan.

We learn after 'the fall of man' in the Garden of Eden, that Adam forfeits His special relationship with God and as a result of his sin, God gives power to Satan over planet earth. Three times in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to Satan as 'The prince of this World.'

Jesus defeated Satan on the Cross but until Jesus returns at His Second coming to set up the Kingdom of God, Satan has dominion over the Earth.

So now the devil is thinking, perhaps if he speaks something that is actually Biblically true, it might be a better strategy in order to get Jesus to sin.

But Jesus, the Author of the Bible ('The Word made flesh' as it tells us in John chapter 1) responds with another Scripture:

'It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'

'It is written!' This scripture, which he has quoted to Satan, comes from Deuteronomy 6 verse 13.

Now, on the third occasion, Satan becomes even more cunning. He now uses a scripture himself – out of context by the way – to try to tempt Jesus.

According to verses 9 to 11, it says:

'The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" '

Satan has quoted Psalm 91: verses 11 and 12 to Jesus. So how will Jesus respond this time?

He simply uses the exact same strategy. He is not flustered, He does not get angry or irritated, He simply quotes from Deuteronomy 6 again, this time verse 16:

‘Jesus answered, ‘It is said: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” ‘

Verse 13 then says, ‘When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.’

Satan failed to tempt Jesus to sin, he left Him, he went away - BUT note he is never satisfied and waits for another time to come back to try again.

And he will do this to us. He will come back time and time again to tempt us, usually when our guard is down, so we must work hard to continually be on our guard, and stand up to him at every opportunity. How? By quoting God’s truth to him at every opportunity.

Finally, verse 14 of this afternoon’s reading shows what happens when we stand up to Satan and pass the God-ordained test or tests. It says

‘Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit’.

Luke told us in verse 1, Jesus entered the wilderness, full of the Holy Spirit, he would do – after all He is the Son of God - but after the tempting by the devil, because he passed God’s test and did not sin, he left the wilderness IN THE POWER of the Holy Spirit!

Many born-again Christians are full of the Holy Spirit but sadly few in my experience, are full of the POWER of the Holy Spirit and moving in the gifts of the Spirit.

I will finish now with a short summary:

The devil will tempt us in many different ways to get us to sin. He will even use Scriptures to try to trick us into thinking it’s OK.

He uses language like, ‘If you are a Christian then why don’t you do more for God?’ – but this might be a ploy to cause you stress and burn-out by doing too much and so you may need to reply with Psalm 46 verse 10 and say, “It is written ‘Be still and know that I am God.’ “

He might say, ‘If you love your dying father/wife/son, why not put them out of their misery by administering a fatal dose of a drug?’ You might then have to quote Exodus 20 verse 13 - the commandment where God says ‘Thou shalt not murder.’

The devil may tempt us by appealing to our human desire or needs.

In the case of the reading today, he knew Jesus was hungry, so he tempted Him to create food from stones.

He also tempted Jesus in the area of ambition and lust for power – he told Jesus he would put him in charge of all the kingdoms of the world.

And finally, he suggested Jesus put God to the test.

So he might say to you something like, ‘Jump in front of the bus, God will save you!’

NO, God says we are not to put Him to the test.

Remember, when Satan finally left Jesus, it was only for a time! He will come back – we must never ‘gloat’ over any success we may have over the devil – In 1 Peter chapter 5 we are reminded:

‘Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour’.

If we are to counter Satan’s efforts to lead us astray, we must know our Scriptures – we must read our bibles!

I’ll close now with a thought on how we can apply what we have heard today?

Well, we may not think things like, ‘The devil has been telling me to do something terrible’. That’s the stuff of fiction writers, right? You know the kind of thing, those movies where someone is sent to a mental hospital because he hears voices telling him do horrendous things to people, although this also happens in real life too.

So you might not hear voices, but you may well have thoughts like, ‘I’m so sick and tired of so and so I am going to give him or her a peace of my mind’.

Well, without you knowing it, that idea to do something ungodly has likely come from the devil. So if we apply what we have learned today from Jesus, the strategy to use is to speak to ***yourself*** the words of scripture, just as if you were rebuking the devil. So you might say, ‘No I won’t do that, because God’s word says ‘Love your neighbour as yourself,’ and ‘Do good to those who persecute you.’

So Satan can put ideas and thoughts in your mind. But he can also speak to you through others. After all, once, when Jesus’ disciple, Peter, spoke

something that was contrary to God's will for Jesus' life, Jesus replied to Peter 'Get thee behind me Satan'!

AMEN!

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